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Muhammad Asad's Clarification about His Views on Jesus' Ascension and Concubinage in Islam

A Comparison with the views of Maulana Muhammad Ali

"However, my work on the Quran (which, by the way, was begun in 1960 and not, as mentioned in the article, in 1954) was always completely independent of any organisation and was never "commissioned" by anyone. Since the *Rabita* was kind enough to subscribe, before its publication, to a large number of copies, I acknowledged their generous material assistance by placing, in a spirit of gratitude, the name of *Rabita* on the title page of the first nine

surahs of *The Message of the Quran* published in 1964.

To my great surprise and regret, several — although by no means all — of the members of the *Rabita's* Council took exception to certain of my interpretations of some Quranic verses and condemned the whole work out of hand. I have always been convinced that this "condemnation" was largely due to an insufficient command of the English language by each and every one of

these critics and was obviously based on second-hand information. For instance, one of them even alleged that "Muhammad Asad denies the existence of angels." This allegation is, of course, totally false and absolute nonsense. On almost every page of my translation and commentary there is a mention of angels, and no Muslim in his right mind can or will deny that the Quran is full of references to angels and angelic forces. Of course, we do not know or pretend to know what the angels really are and how they manifest themselves: they belong to the realm of *al-ghayb* — "that which is beyond the reach of human perception" — of which God alone has full knowledge.

However, I suppose that the particular statement that I have denied "angels" has arisen from a total misunderstanding of my note 93 on verses 124-125 of 'Imran which says, literally, "The Prophet's allusion to God's aiding the believers with thousands of angels signifies, metaphorically, a strengthening of the believers' hearts through spiritual forces coming from God" (*The Message of the Quran*, p. 86). This, by the way, was exactly the view of the greatest scholar of recent Muslim history, Muhammad Abduh, as quoted by me in the above mentioned note, citing *Al-Manar*.

Still another member of the *Rabita*

objected to my statement that Islam does not permit concubinage. I have explained verse 3 of *An-Nisa'* in my note 4 (on pp. 101-102 of *The Message of the Quran*),¹ giving the considered view of Mufti Muhammad Abduh as well. Also, I would refer the reader of my work to note 26 on verse 24 of *An-Nisa'* and, in particular, to the views of Tabari (on the authority of Ibn Abbas, Mujahid and others) and, still more prominently, of the illustrious Quran-commentator Razi, who points out that the reference to "all married women," coming as it does immediately after the enumeration of prohibited degrees of relationship, is meant to stress the prohibition of sexual relations with *any* woman other than one's lawful wife.

Other persons, again, objected vehemently to my contention (expressed in my commentary) that nowhere in the Quran is to be found a statement to the effect that God raised Jesus *bodily* to heaven (a view which, by the way, was also held by no less a scholar than Muhammad 'Abduh). In my note 172 on verse 158 of *An-Nisa'* (pp. 134-135 of *The Message of the Quran*),² I gave my reasons for the interpretation adopted by me. Whether this interpretation is accepted or not, however, the fact remains that it does not in any way offend

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THE LIGHT

Managing Editor : Dr. Allah Bakhsh
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Monday — February 8, 1982

THE BISHOP OF LAHORE ON THE BIRTH OF JESUS

"Birth of Jesus according to Quran" is the title of an article contributed by the Rev. Alexander John Malik, Bishop of Lahore published in the daily *Pakistan Times* of Lahore dated 23rd January, 1982. The Bishop has taken great pains to show similarities in the texts of the Holy Quran and the Gospels regarding the virgin birth of Jesus, his exclusive privilege of being the spirit and word of God as well as of his unique miracles. It seems he has not bothered to consider those verses of the Quran which likens Jesus to other messengers of God. Here we would like to question Rev. Malik's expediency in not discussing the distinguishing features of the two great religions — the Unity of Godhead in Islam and the Trinity in Christianity. Similarly salvation in Islam depends on man's righteous actions in this world whereas in Christianity it solely depends on the belief on the blood of Jesus on the Cross. To a common Muslim miraculous birth of Prophet Jesus does not elevate him to the unique position to be called "the son God" or "One of the three god-heads". Rev. Malik by referring to verses 16-35 of Chapter Mary in connection with the birth of Prophet Jesus has tried to prove his special significance among the prophets of God, as is evident from a sentence "the birth of

Jesus, according to the Quran, would be brought about by God's special decree." The edifice of Divine sonship built on the Quranic verses just referred to, come to the ground, when the last verse says : "It is not for God to take a son to Him." The verse which immediately follows, says, "And surely God is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him (alone). That is the right path". The crux of the question is that inspite of all the 'miraculous' qualities attached to the person of Jesus, according to the Quran, he does not move into the divine realm, as the Quran says : "Messiah, son of Mary, was only a messenger ; messengers before him had passed away." (5 : 75)

The main confusion about certain aspects of Jesus' personality comes in when metaphorical description or facts and conversation taken place in a vision are taken literally. Or at places sequence of events have been misconstrued as in the case of verses 29, 30, 31 of Chapter Mary.

Rev. Malik has referred to the similarities of account of Jesus' life found in the Quran and the Gospels. In other words he has tried to impress upon his Muslim readers the authenticity of the Gospel account because it accords with what is stated in the Quran. An ordinary student of the Bible very well knows that

the four Gospels differ with each other on so many points about Jesus. These contradictory and variant accounts of Jesus' life contained in the Bible have compelled Christian scholars to identify two different persons of Jesus. The one depicted by the facts of history — the historical Jesus; and the other carved out of the teachings of the Church—Jesus of the Gospels. Of all the religious scriptures of the world, the Quran is the only revealed book which has not only cleared Jesus and his mother of the calumnies heaped upon them, but has established Jesus as the great prophet of God sent to the Israelites. New researches and discoveries made in the West have confirmed what the Quran said about Jesus and his original teachings fourteen hundred years ago and disproved what is stated in the Gospels. Rev. Malik by referring to the Quranic account of annunciation and birth of Jesus in support of what is stated in the Gospels has in fact affirmed what the Quran said about the previous revealed books, "It contains all the right books" (98 : 3)

One should not forget that a Muslim believes Torah and the Gospel to be originally revealed by God whereas the Christians does not believe the Quran to be the word of God at all. If today Quranic account of Jesus' life as a man and not as God is more acceptable to the Western Christian scholars and they have started doubting the authenticity of the Biblical account, then one should give credence to the Quran as the revealed word of God and not to the Gospels which have been compiled by the disciples of Jesus.

The article contains several points

which need detailed discussion. At the moment we would like to comment on Rev. Malik's claim about Jesus as the Second Adam on the basis that he alone has been called "the word from God" in the Quran.

Let us quote the Bishop on this point : "We may call Adam the first Adam and Christ Jesus the second Adam. Actually the New Testament uses the title the second or new Adam for Christ, *though this title is not used for Christ in the Quran*. The first Adam was created out of dust and then God's creative-word was operative on dust. The second Adam (Jesus Christ) was created by casting creative-command (*Kun*) into Mary and hence Jesus Christ has been called the word of God in the Quran. *He is the only one individual for whom this title is used in the Quran*". (italics are mine)

In the Holy Quran however we read :

"So the angels called to him (Zacharias) as he stood praying in the sanctuary: Allah gives thee the good news of John, verifying a word from Allah (*Kalimatun min Allah*), and honourable and chaste, and a prophet from among the good ones." (3 : 38)

So according to the Holy Quran, John the Baptist, has also been said to be a 'Word from Allah'.

As for the use of the phrase 'Spirit of Allah' for Jesus is concerned, it is not at all his exclusive privilege. We give below two quotations from the Holy Quran where this phrase 'Spirit of Allah' has been used for man in general.

"When thy Lord informed the angels; I am going to create a mortal of sounding clay, of black-mud fashioned into shape. So when I have made him comp-

plete and breathed into him of *My Spirit*, fall down making obeisance to him". (15 : 29)

"Who made beautiful every thing He created, and He began the creation of man from dust. Then He made his progeny of an extract of worthless water. Then He made *him complete and breathed into him of His Spirit*, and gave you ears, eyes and hearts, little it is that you give thanks". (32 : 7-9)

In the above verses it is stated that Allah breathed His Spirit into the same man who was created of dust. But Rev. Malik makes two Adams out of one. The first Adam was made of dust and it had nothing to do with God's Spirit whereas the second or new Adam, Jesus ("though not mentioned in the Quran but mentioned in the New Testament." according to the Bishop) is not created from dust but is created by a creative-command (*Kun*) or God's Word or Spirit cast in Mary's womb. Muslims who believe in the virgin birth of Jesus does not consider it a special privilege of Jesus as Adam was created even without father and mother. If being born fatherless is a miracle and an act of creative-command then being born fatherless and motherless is a much greater miracle as well as a unique act of creative-command!

Thus the exclusive privilege claimed by the Bishop for Jesus falls to the ground.

Himself admitting that Quran does not speak of a second or New Adam and it is the New Testament which says so, the Bishop still wants his readers to conclude that according to the

Quran it is only the second or new Adam (Jesus) in whom the spirit or word of God is breathed. But the Holy Quran never states so. It simply states that every man is created out of dust, as he is, and that the Word or Spirit of God has been breathed into him in order to complete him. This is the same thing as the Biblical saying that man has been created in the image of God. This general Divine law of creating man from dust and then breathing into him His spirit by His creative-command has been stated in the Holy Quran at another place quoted by the Bishop himself thus :

"According to God, likeness of Jesus is as the likeness to Adam. He created him from dust and then said to him "Be" and 'it is" (3 : 58). The Holy Quran in this verse clearly establishes the fundamental similarities between Adam and Jesus in at least two respects ; the creation of both of them from dust as well as application of the creative-command. But still Rev. Malik would like us to believe that Jesus and Adam do not resemble each other because Jesus was not created from dust but by the creative-command while Adam was created just from dust and not by the creative-command.

It may be pointed out that verse (3 : 58) which occurs at the end of the statement detailing the news of birth of Jesus to Mary, of his ministry to Israelites, of their rejection of him ; and of his miracles was revealed on the occasion of the visit of the Christian deputation of Najran. The Jewish

view was that Jesus was conceived of sin, while the Christian believed him to be the only individual born of the Spirit of God Who entered into Mary's womb. But the verse categorically regards both these views to be wrong. Jesus was not conceived in sin but was born in the natural course like Adam (or man), was created from dust and then received the Divine-call. The Holy Prophet's reply to the Najran deputation in this respect leaves not the least doubt about such an interpretation:

"Do you not know that Jesus was conceived by a woman in the manner in which all women conceive? Then she was delivered of him as women deliver their children, then he was fed as children are fed. Then he ate food and drank water and answered the call of nature."

The answer of the deputation to all these questions having been in the affirmative, the Holy Prophet said: "Then how can your claim that he was God or Son of God be true"? (Tabari)

The verse of the Holy Quran and the Hadith need no more comment to prove that Jesus was like Adam and in no way God or Son of God or even in any way superior to him. But the Bishop tries to prove that the two were unlike and dissimilar to each other.

In another verse of the Holy Quran Jesus has been likened to other prophets as well. It says:

"The Messiah, son of Mary, was no more than a messenger; messengers (like him) had passed away before him. His mother was a truthful woman. They both used to eat food. See how We make messages clear to them! But behold! how they are turned away... Say: Do you serve besides Allah that which controls for you neither harm nor good. Allah is the only one Who is All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. Say: O people of the Book, exaggerate not in the matter of your faith unjustly, and follow not the low desires of people who went astray and led many astray, and went astray from the right path". (5: 75-77)

If in the verse 3: 58 Jesus has been likened to Adam, in the above verses, he is stated to be no more than other messengers before him. At the same time Christians have been warned not to regard him any more than a God's messenger like other prophets for that would mean going beyond the true limits and exceeding the bounds of faith. — A.B.

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Fire From the Green Tree

N.A. FARUQUI, LAHORE

The Holy Quran says :

Does not man see that We have created him from a small life-germ ? Then lo ! he is an open disputant. And he strikes out a likeness for Us, and forgets his own creation. Says he ; Who will give life to the bones, when they are rotten ? Say : He will give life to them, Who brought them into existence at first. And He is the Knower of all creation, Who produced fire for you from the green tree, so that with it you kindle. (36 : 77-80)

These are verses of the well-known chapter, *Surah Ya Seen*, which is recited to a person who is dying. And rightly so, for it discusses the question of life after death, and holds out promise of the life eternal. There could be nothing more re-assuring and soothing to a dying person, for who wants to cease to exist ? However poor and miserable one's life may be, one does not wish to die as that *looks* like the end of one's existence. He who commits suicide is rightly described by the law as "temporarily of unsound mind". He is liable to punishment, if he survives the attempt, under all laws. He also incurs the punishment of the Hereafter.

A normal person who is sound in mind does not wish to cease to exist. To him the good news that he is merely passing

on to a next and a better life is the best news that could be. Says the Holy Quran : "Nay, you prefer the life of this world, while the Hereafter is better and more lasting" (87 : 16-17). What could be better news to the dying person ?

Life After Death

Life after death is therefore the fulfilment of man's strongest desire to live for ever. All religions have given this assurance. Yet, a large number of people these days deny that there is life after death. Why ? Because of the Divine Judgment which will be made in the Hereafter of how one spent one's life in this world. The skeptics do not really want to be judged. But they raise spurious objections about the possibility of resuscitation. And the well-known objection is the one quoted in the verses with which this article opens, "Who will give life to the bones when they are rotten ?" The flesh rots first. The bones last a long time. But even they rot in course of time. So this ultimate disappearance of the human body is made the basis for the objection to resuscitation.

The first point made by the Holy Quran about a person who raises such an objection is that "He strikes out a

likeness for Us, and forgets his own creation", meaning that such a person judges Allah upon himself, forgetting that he is a mere creature while Allah is the Creator and the two cannot be alike. Man is helpless in the matter of creation because he himself is a part of it. He should not judge the Great Creator upon himself. Still the objection has to be answered on merits. How can man reduced to dust be resuscitated?

To that a *preliminary* reply is given : "He will give life to them Who brought them into existence at first." This is really a theoretical reply to a theoretical objection, "who can re-create the human body after it is reduced to dust?" The plain, simple but most logical answer is : "The same Creator Who first created the human body from dust".

I have said that this is only a theoretical reply to a theoretical objection. For the Holy Quran says that the human body which deteriorates with age and becomes a burden and a suffering to the ageing person is no longer a suitable vehicle for the human soul whose progress is unlimited and everlasting. The soul therefore passes on to another, a better and an ever-lasting world where it gets a body which does not deteriorate because it is ever-lasting like the world of the Hereafter, unlike this world's ephemeral life for which an ephemeral body was given. Says

the Holy Quran in the same chapter as the opening verses of this article : "And whosoever We cause to live long (in this world), We reduce to an abject state in the matter of physical creation. Do they not understand?" What people do not understand is that the physical body which necessarily deteriorates with age cannot be the vehicle for an ever-lasting life. It is a drag, a burden and a source of constant suffering to the ageing person. So that man is in a way glad to be relieved of his physical sufferings at death. And death should have no horrors or the fear of ceasing to exist, for he goes to a better and an everlasting life.

The common misconception that the same body of clay which is reduced to dust in the grave will be revived is removed a few verses later in the same chapter of the Holy Quran : "Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the *like* of them? Yes! And He is the Creator *par excellence*, the Knowledgeable" (36 : 81). The mention of the creation of heavens in this verse conveys the great knowledge that the heavens were created for man's life after death. His soul came from the heavens to which it "returns". The fact of the human soul *returning* to its Creator after death is repeated so often in the Holy Quran.

The commentary of the late Maulana

Muhammad Ali on the verse quoted immediately above is most illuminating: "In the Resurrection, therefore, men will be the like of what they are here, not exactly the same bodies of clay. Elsewhere, after mentioning that man wonders at the new creation, it is said, "We know indeed what the earth diminishes of them, and with Us is a writing (record) that preserves" (50 : 4). The body may become dust ; but what man does of good or evil is preserved, and it is according to this good or evil that he receives a new body. The idea of Resurrection is carried to perfection in Islam, and the Resurrection is meant to give a new life to all. Ultimately the spirit of man is returned to the Spirit Divine, and that is again and again called the meeting with God."

The Mystery of Resurrection

In this scientific age, man wants to know, and to unveil, all mysteries of Allah's wonderful creation. That leads to scientific research in all branches of the creation. The Holy Quran is not a book of physical sciences. But it has made a science of religion and spiritual matters. To enable man to understand the science of the spiritual world, the Holy Quran frequently refers to the physical sciences, because the material and spiritual worlds (call them matter and anti-matter as the modern scientists refer to the two) run parallel. And in do-

ing so, the Holy Quran disclosed scientific truths nearly 1400 years ago which were not known then even to the scientists of that time. To give only two out of several such cases, the Holy Quran said, "And We gave life to all things from water", or "And We created a pair of each thing" (51 : 49). The Arabic word translated as 'pair' has a wider connotation of opposite sexes or opposites which attract each other such as positive and negative particles of electricity.

The Holy Quran is the only revealed book to give even a scientific explanation, with reference to the physical world, of how man's resurrection takes place after death. In the verses quoted at the beginning of this article, the giving of next life to the dead persons is compared to the production of "fire for you from the green tree, so that with it you kindle".

Man and the Tree

The above comparison made by the Holy Quran is an amazingly simple explanation in a few words of the mystery of resurrection. Details of resurrection may or may not become known to us when we die because we ourselves will be undergoing the process. But one gets some concept of the complicated mystery from the comparison made by the Holy Quran.

The greenness of the tree, in fact of

all vegetation, is due to the presence in it of a green chemical substance called Chlorophyll. But the Holy Quran has named the tree, and not all the vegetation, for comparison to the man as there is a similarity between the two. The tree is rooted in the earth from which it draws its sustenance and life. So is man rooted in the earth in this life to draw his sustenance and physical life. When sunlight from the sky falls on the tree-sapling it grows and acquires its stature. So does man grow in human stature in the moral and spiritual sense, when the heavenly light (sent down by Allah in the form of revelation through His prophets) falls on man and he benefits from it. As the tree grows old and wrinkles up, and ultimately dries up and dies, it is cut from its roots in the earth. So does man wrinkle up with age, lose his health and colour and ultimately die, when his physical link with the earth is cut off. The sun's energy, as I will explain later, lies hidden in the dead and dried up tree and is released when a spark is provided and fire is produced which is the stored-up sun's energy re-appearing as heat and light as it had fallen from the sun on the tree. So will man's spiritual-self, made up of the soul which came from Above and developed in the human body by whatever good or bad man did in his life, and which "self" (*Nafs*) lies hidden in him, emerges into

the next life. The cause which made the hidden energy of the sun re-emerge from the dead tree was the spark applied to it. In the case of man, the cause will be the Divine Command, for the Holy Quran says in the very next verse: "His command, when He intends anything is only to say to it; Be, and it becomes". (36: 82). I repeat a portion of Maulana Muhammad Ali's commentary on this: "The body may become dust; but what man does of good or evil is preserved, and it is according to this good or evil that he receives a new body."

Chlorophyll and Photo-synthesis

Let us revert to the green tree. Its greenness, as I have already explained, is due to the presence of a chemical substance called Chlorophyll. Its primary function is to absorb carbon dioxide gas from the air, but only when the sunlight falls on it. What happens then is a chemical process called photo-synthesis. It is retarded on cloudy days and is totally stopped in the dark. Carbon dioxide thus taken in combines with water which the leaves have been supplied from the earth to undergo a series of chemical changes within the leaves. The final product is glucose (sugar) that serves as food for the tree's growth and development. All these re-actions, which are continuously going on in the tree, require some kind of energy for their functioning,

which in this case is supplied by the sun light. Chlorophyll traps the sunlight and converts it into solar energy that is used by the plant in manufacturing glucose from carbon dioxide and water.

The solar energy does not disappear after it has performed the manufacturing process but remains entrapped in the plant substance. The energy lies, so to say, in a dormant state. It is a scientific axiom that energy cannot be destroyed but it can be transformed into different forms. The solar energy lies conserved even in the apparently dead and dry logs of wood — but imperceptible to the human eyes due to its limited range of vision. The dormant energy requires a cause to become visible. The cause is provided by its ignition. The elements composing its substance disassociate into the elements it was made of, namely, carbon dioxide, water etc. During this process of disassociation, the conserved solar energy is re-transformed into light and heat (which we term as fire) which originally came from the sun in the form of light and heat. The fire from the wood thus comes from the sun really.

Summing up

The analogy drawn by the Holy Quran may be analysed as follows :

(a) Like the green tree, man is rooted in the earth from which he originates and from which he draws the water of life.

(b) Like the green tree again, man acquires his true stature by a combination of the water of earthly life as well as

the heavenly light sent down by Allah in the form of revelation through prophets who have been compared to the sun. Says the Holy Quran : Blessed is He Who made the stars in the heavens and made therein a sun and a moon which is illuminated" (25 : 61). Now, science has revealed that the stars are also really suns, but they look like stars because of their distance from the earth. Similarly, the prophets, before the Holy Prophet Muhammad, have become distant from us because their revealed books are more or less lost and so are their true teachings. Their heavenly light has thus become dim for us. By Divine dispensation, *the star* (namely our sun) meant to give heavenly light to the earth for all time to come however shines in its full glory. Now, the Holy Prophet Muhammad has been compared to our luminous sun (33 : 46) in the spiritual world. And the Book revealed to him is preserved completely as admitted even by its critics. And the sayings and deeds of the Holy Prophet are also *fully* preserved. So that his revealed Book and his example shine in full glory for the benefit of mankind for all time to come. (The moon referred to in the verse quoted above are the *Mujaddids* or reformers who will appear every 100 years and will reflect the Prophet's light after he died as the moon reflects the sun's

light after it has set. Like the moon, because of their elevation in the spiritual world, the *Mujaddids* catch the Holy Prophet's light and reflect it for the benefit of the world).

(c) Like the green tree, with the help of the heavenly light, the man who accepts that light and acts upon it, gains moral and spiritual stature for himself and also serves Allah's creation as the green tree does. Remember, that with the help of the heavenly light the green tree derives nourishment for its own growth and development, and it also purifies the atmosphere by absorbing and breaking up its poisonous carbon dioxide, and re-generating oxygen for the benefit of mankind and even the animals.

(d) When the tree dies, it is cut off from the earth. So is man on his death.

(e) When a spark is applied to the dead and dried up tree, it is transformed into another form, namely, that of fire. In that process the carbon within the tree combines with the oxygen once generated by the tree for the benefit of mankind and the animal world. Similarly, a dead human being's own goodness and the good he did to others combine to give him the new life. The activating cause, like the spark applied to the dead wood, is the Divine Command, "Be, and it becomes" as already

explained earlier. Like the sun's energy hidden in the tree which comes out in the form of fire when the wood is lit, the spiritual energy received by man from On High which lies hidden in his body comes out of it in the form of a new creation as different from his first creation as fire is from the dead wood.

Human Form in the Hereafter

I have already quoted the Holy Quran's verse: "Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them (human beings). Yes. And He is the Creator *par excellence*, the Knowledgeable" (36 : 81).

Man's re-creation for his life in the heavens will be *like* his worldly being but not the same body. Other places in the Holy Quran also throw light on the subject. To quote one of them: "We have ordained death among you, and We are not to be overcome, that We may change your state and make you grow into what you know not" (56 : 60-61). Maulana Muhammad Ali's commentary on it runs as follows: "It is the Resurrection that is spoken of here. The present state will be changed, we are told, and men will be made to grow into a new creation which they do not know (here). Clearly it is not the material body of this life, but a new body which grows out of the deeds of men". (The End)

The Forbidden Tree - III

by DR. M. A. SHAKOOR, M.B.B.S.

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The views of other interpreters

So far I know, the interpreters of the Bible were almost silent about the identity of the tree, as was mentioned in the Scriptures. On the other hand, the interpreters of the Quran tried their utmost to find it out, but they failed. I have seen so many books of these interpretations and I found that the interpreters suggested several names for the forbidden tree, but they did it out of their own imagination without having any rhyme or reason.

Many of the interpreters of both the Quran and the Bible tell us that Adam and his mate were, at first placed and created in high heavens naming it as paradise, and then the prohibition against the tree was promulgated, and hence according to their saying, it is a tree of the paradise and therefore it cannot be found here on this earth. But it seems to be incorrect. Adam was in fact, a creature of this earth. Those who say, that Adam was created first in the paradise and later on transferred to this earth, as being punished for eating up the fruit of the forbidden tree, do not understand the law of creation and the correct way of interpre-

ting the revealed messages. And thus they have mostly based their interpretations on mythical ideas untenable to the men of science and wisdom.

One question may arise, why a tree of this nature, in which there is no good is created? In fact, I myself faced this once. It was the 13th of September 1974, when I was attending a seminar, which was held in the auditorium of Bangladesh Islamic Foundation and the topic for discussion was 'Smoking and its Affects on Health'.

At the last phase of the meeting, questions were invited from the audience. One of the questions was, why a tree of this nature, having no good in it, and which produces harms beyond measure, is created then? The question perturbed me. I thought over it all these years and now I can say with confidence that I have found the reply.

It is said that the whole affair of Adam and his mate, the story of Satan and the 'tree' as depicted in the Scriptures is an allegorical description.

The rule of interpretation

There is a definite guide-line for the interpretation of scriptural narrations. In almost all the Scriptures, there are

two categories of verses, some of them are decisive and others are allegorical. The decisive verses are mainly concerned with the laws governing the problems of life and it should not have dual meanings — whereas the allegorical narrations should not be interpreted literally. Those who do it otherwise, create anomalies and disruptions, by giving out the irrational meaning of these verses. Truly speaking, there is practically no room for anomalies between the way of science and that of ethics. The anomalies are created by erroneous interpretation of Quranic verses.

In fact, the 'tree' was created as a trial for the good of mankind, working itself like a computer to identify the good men of the society from those who are not good. See, what God Himself says about it, as proclaimed in one of the verses of Al-Quran and addressed to the Prophet :

And when he said to thee : Surely the Lord encompasses men. And We made not the vision which We showed to thee but a trial for men, as also the tree cursed in the Quran. And We warn them but it only adds to their great inordinacy. (17 : 60)

To justify the comment, that the tree was created with mysteries by the Almighty Himself and also of staging the drama where the tree will Play

a very important role in the last phase of human civilisation,—mark — how the tree was kept hidden and preserved in a land which was almost unknown to the people of the eastern hemisphere till 1492, the year when Columbus and his men landed on the shores of America.

I would like to refer here again to Genesis (2 : 16-17). The narrations are very simple and self-explanatory. It is said that those who will go near that tree, that is those who will take it, will surely die. What we see now, that people are constantly dying of Cancer, Peptic Ulcer, Buerger's disease, Chronic Bronchitis, Cardiac diseases and many other ailments. These are caused mainly due to indulgence in smoking and chewing of Tobacco leaves. But strange it is that very few could understand the real significance of these prophecies.

Effects of abstinence

As noted above, I was advising my patients to discard the habit of smoking Tobacco and also of chewing all its other derivatives. I observed that it is a very tough job for many to give it up. But it is also found that those who abstained from smoking, attained some remarkable changes in their physical and mental conditions.

In collecting information from my patients, my process of questioning differs from that of an average physician. I do not keep my questions limited to

his or her habit of smoking only, but I try to find out whether he or she chews Tobacco leaves and its other derivatives.

I know that my colleagues take it very lightly, while I give maximum importance to these informations. In my investigations, when I find that any patient who is an indulger of Tobacco and when he or she agrees to stop it, then my line of treatment becomes very easy as the cost of treatment becomes less, with lesser quantity of medicine. It should be noted that whenever I speak of abstinence, I mean the total abstinence of Tobacco in any form.

I observed that some of my patients stopped smoking but started chewing Tobacco leaves. To me, it is all the same whether you smoke cigarettes or chew the leaf and hence I press for total abstinence. From my own experience, I believe that any patient suffering from any chronic disease, when abstain from Tobacco immediately gets some relief.

The cure with little or no medicine

My theme of 'cure with little or no medicine' is found very successful. In every person there is a self-defensive mechanism to fight against both internal and external aggressions. At times, the mechanism may be weak and need external aid. External aids in the form of medicaments is needed no doubt, but undue and over-medication is always

bad. I do not nullify the need of medicine coming as external aid, but what I would like to stress is that human body remains fit more with prophylaxis than with unwanted medicine, prescribed on commercial interests. I would like to suggest that whenever the need of external aid arises, the internal self-defensive mechanism should not be disturbed. It should always be kept vigil and the treatment should be done with patience and prayer, along with taking other health and hygienic measures. One may feel disgusted to hear about 'prayers' as I suggested but truly speaking prayer and meditations play a very important role in the process of healing, specially in my theme of 'cure with little or no medicine.'

I always try to treat my patients with 'little or no medicine'. But often it is criticised. There is a group of people who suffer from a psychological hobby of taking medicines always. Usually they are the rich people who live in affluence and luxury. There are others, majority of whom live in the rural areas, who are in dire need of diet and medicine. Yet there are others who enjoy free medical facilities. They are usually from the privileged few, the high officials. Under these circumstances, I believe that all these patients should be saved, not only from the diseases but also from the cruel clutches of the greedy exploiters. None should be

allowed to exploit people who are suffering from disease or are living in poverty. I can say with my experience of 40 years that majority of our people are not getting treatment from medical doctors but are mostly exploited by the quacks.

Public contact

As stated above, we three — that is myself and two of my patients started this move, which was the outcome of a series of talks held from 1972 to 1975. Later on, these two persons became so much enthusiastic that they started preaching it in the buses, trains, bazars and other public places.

We arranged for a public meeting on the 26th of March 1975, where we presented the aims and objects of the movement. And since then we are meeting every year in seminars, usually in the Tobacco growing season, from December to March to assess the yearly progress.

In the beginning we met some mixed reactions from public. At times, our workers faced rebuffs and tauntings. Gradually it gained some momentum. It so happened that a social worker, M.A. Muquith Khan of Mirpur, Dacca became inspired by the theme of our movement. He called for a seminar at Mirpur and invited many of his friends and associates. He invited me to attend

it. The seminar was held on the 27th of January 1980, where I met a very important section of people. Many from the audience talked on the subject 'Smoking and its affects on Health'. The editor of *Jahan-i-Naw* Mr. Habib-ur-Rahman suggested in his speech that such a movement should not lie dormant in a remote yillage, rather it should be transferred to the heart of the city, to make it a national organisation.

Accordingly we convened our first seminar at Dacca, on 'Smoking'. The meeting was held in the auditorium of Bangladesh Islamic Foundation, on the 30th March 1980. We invited Professor Nural Islam, the then Director of the P.G. Hospital Dacca, who was very kind to attend the seminar as the Chief Guest. In his speech Prof. Islam advised us to go on with full speed to spread the motto of the movement to every corner of the country. He assured us of his full help and co-operation.

Thus the 'Anti-Tobacco Movement Bangladesh, came to the city. We formed the central committee with 13 members, Professor Islam being its chief Patron. We held our next seminar on the 18th January, 1981, in the Conference Hall of the Bangladesh Diabetic Association, Dacca. The seminar was a great success and it was mainly due to the

kind presence and participation of two distinguished guests of international repute. They were Sir John Crofton, Ex-President Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and Dr. (Mrs.) Eileen Crofton, Member of the World Health Organisation, expert committee on smoking control and medical director of action on smoking and health, Scotland.

The meeting was presided over by Professor Nurul Islam and the inauguration speech was delivered by Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim, the founder-president of the Bangladesh Diabetic Association.

Conclusion

It is often argued and usually the arguments come from the smokers, that non-smokers are not immune from diseases. We too admit that. Moreover, we never claim that smoking is mainly responsible for all the diseases and miseries rather we like to say that we can organise a world wide movement of this sort, telling the saner section of the people that Tobacco brings incurable diseases. We also propose that if we can uproot the plant within a reasonable time, it will surely minimise the miseries of man and the number of diseases as well. Concomitantly, it will increase human peace and affluence.

It's a very good news that almost all the thinkers, physicians, scientists, social

workers and the various media such as Radio, television and News Papers are propagating against the dangers of smoking. But truly speaking, these anti-smoking campaigns are not enough, rather a world-wide campaign against 'this tree' should be organised. We invite the 'WHO' to come forward, with their men and materials, with the motto of uprooting this poison-producing plant from the surface of the earth, at least by the end of this century.

Many may stand against this move, with the plea of protecting the interest of millions of workers, traders and growers of Tobacco and its derivatives. But whatever might be the arguments, the issue remains the same. You cannot sell a commodity that brings incurable diseases and painful agonies. In the mean time, we can take up a long-term planned policy, to rehabilitate all the growers, traders, manufacturers and distributors of Tobacco and the mill and the machineries may be converted to grow-more-food and also in manufacturing other essential commodities.

One may say that smoking is not the only cause of Cancer and that non-smokers also get Cancer. But truly speaking, there is practically no non-smoker now a days, who is not compelled to inhale polluted air, as infused with the poison of smoking. And thus the remedy lies not in the stoppage of smok-

ing only, but in a planned policy of uprooting the plant itself.

And so, if you are a Muslim ready to abide by the laws of Al-Quran, and similarly if you be a Jew or a Christian, ready to believe in the truths of the Old and New Testaments, and even if you have no faith in any religion, — then come, let us conform to a common understanding, for the common cause of doing good to mankind, — that we shall not smoke, or use it in any form, any more. In other words, we shall not go near that very tree, as foretold and forbidden in the Scriptures.

It is often said, that it's a tough job, to give up smoking. But know it that reformation is always tough, rough and painstaking. And thus, it cannot be done by the urge and efforts of an individual alone or a small band of workers only, rather the call should come up from all the Churches, Mosques Synagogues and Pagodas, synchronising with the message of warnings about 'this tree', as depicted in the Bible.

'But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said : Ye shall not eat of it neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.'
(Genesis, 3 : 3)

Let us take up this drive of uprooting this poisonous plant from the surface of the earth, at least by the end of this century and save humanity from ailment and suffering. (Concluded)

WE BELIEVE

(1) After the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) Allah has completely barred the appearance of a prophet, old or new.

(2) After the Holy Prophet, Gabriel can never descend and bring Prophetic Revelation (*Wahy Nubuwwah*) to any person.

(3) If Gabriel were to descend with one word of Prophetic Revelation (*Wahy Nubuwwah*) on any person, it would contradict the two complementary verses :

"This day have I perfected your Religion for you" (5 : 5) ; "He is the Messenger of Allah and the Last of the prophets."

(4) The Holy Prophet also said : "I am Muhammad and I am Ahmad and I am al-'Aqib (the one who comes last) after whom there can be no prophet". (Al-Bukhari : Kitab al-Manaqib).

(5) In the light of the above Islamic fundamentals, the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement never claimed to be a *Nabi*, but the God-Ordained Mujaddid ("The Promised Messiah") of the 14th Islamic Century, having been expressly raised to re-establish the predominance of Islam in the world.

(6) He named his followers 'Ahmadi' after the Holy Prophet's *Jamali* (beatific) name 'Ahmad'.

(7) He proclaimed that no verse of the Holy Qur'an has been abrogated nor shall ever be abrogated.

(8) All the Companions of the Holy Prophet and the Imams are venerable.

(9) It is spiritually conducive to our Faith to accept the revivalist Islamic missions of all *Mujaddids* (Renovators).

(10) Any one who declares his faith in the *Kalimah* (Muslim formula of faith — *la ilaha ilallahu Muhammadur Rasulul-lah* — is a Muslim.

MUHAMMAD ASAD'S CLARIFICATION... from p. 2)

against the dignity of the Prophet Jesus or against any fundamental Islamic belief. In this connection, I would refer the reader to verse 144 of *Al' Imran*,³ which speaks of *all* apostles before the last and greatest of them all, the Arabian Prophet Muhammad, (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as having passed away, in other words, as having died physically, as is obvious from the context (see my corresponding note 104 on p. 89 of *The Message of the Quran*).⁴

Whether one agrees or does not agree with my interpretations of this or that point, we should remember that even the great classical Quran commentators disagreed on many details, thus increasingly deepening and widening our understanding of the Holy Quran. So it will continue, *insha-Allah*, until the end of time. This has been and will always remain the spirit in which I approach the Message of the Holy Quran and the eternal heritage of the Last Prophet. May God judge us all in His infinite wisdom and mercy." (*Arabia, The Islamic World Review*, October 1981, p. 4).

Maulana Muhammad Ali on Jesus' Ascension

"*Raf'* signifies *raising* or *elevating*, and also *exalting* or *making honourable* (T, LL). But where the *raf'* of a man to Allah is spoken of in the Holy Qur'an,

or in the religious literature of Islam, it is always in the latter sense, for raising a man in his body to Himself implies that the Divine being is limited to a place. This is made plain by the prayer which every Muslim repeats several times daily in his prayers in the sitting position between the two prostrations: *wa-raf'ni*, meaning *and exalt me*. Of course no one supposed this prayer to be for raising of the body to the heavens. Hence even those commentators who are predisposed, having, no doubt, been misled by Christian tradition, to accept Jesus Christ as having been raised alive to heaven, have been compelled to admit that the word *raf'* is here used not for raising aloft but for *exalting and honouring*. And commenting on the words which follow this statement, Rz. says: *This shows that raf' is exalting in degree and in praise, not in place and direction. The exaltation of Jesus mentioned here is a reply to the Jews, whose object was to make him die an accursed and ignominious death on the cross.*" —(English Translation of the Quran, Footnote No. 437 on verse 3 : 54 p. 147)

"For the significance of *raf'* see 437. Being exalted in the Divine presence was opposed to being killed on the cross. Deut. 21 : 23 explains this, for there we have, *he that is hanged is cursed of God*. If Jesus had died on the cross he would have been accursed; hence the statement made here — he was not killed on

the cross and accursed but he was exalted in the Divine presence. — (*Footnote No. 649 on verse 4 ; 158, p. 232*)

Maulana Muhammad Ali on Concubinage in Islam

“This verse lays down the conditions under which those taken prisoners in war may be taken in marriage. I do not find any verse in the Holy Qur’an or any instance in the Prophet’s life, sanctioning what is called *concubinage*. On more occasions than one, when the establishment of conjugal relations with slave-girls is mentioned, their taking in marriage is clearly laid down as a condition as in v. 3, v. 24, and this verse. Here marriage with those taken prisoners in war is allowed under certain circumstances, the first of these being that they should be believing women or Muslims. There are two more conditions : (1) that a man has not the means to marry a free woman as the opening words show, and (2) that he fears to fall into evil as stated in the concluding words. If, then, even marriage with her is allowed under exceptional circumstances, it is quite unreasonable to suppose that her master is allowed to have conjugal relations with her without taking her for a wife. She was no doubt placed on a lower level in Arab society than a free woman, but that is all. Perhaps the strictness of the rules regarding marriage with a female slave is due to the consideration that he who seeks her in marriage may first have

her freed from slavery.

It may be said that this verse speaks of others than the masters of the slave-girls, because it requires the permission of the masters. The only right the master could reasonably claim is that he does not require the permission of anybody else, yet he must take her as a wife, not as a paramour. But see the Prophet’s hadith quoted in 540, according to which the master is required to educate the slave girl, giving her the best education, then free her and then marry her. One more point arising out of this verse may be noted. It is plainly laid down here that if a married slave girl commits adultery, her punishment is half of the punishment prescribed for the free married woman who commits adultery. This shows that the Holy Qur’an never contemplated *stoning* as the punishment for adultery because it could not be halved, and as a matter of fact the Holy Book nowhere speaks of stoning ; the only punishment for adultery that it speaks of is a hundred stripes (24:2). — (*English Translation of the Quran, Footnote No. 561 on verse 4 : 25, pp. 197-98*)

Muhammad Asad on Concubinage in Islam

1. “And if you have reason to fear that you might not act equitably towards orphans, then marry from among (other) women such as are lawful to you — (even) two, or three or four : but if you

have reason to fear that you might not be able to treat them with equal fairness, then (only) one — (from among) those whom you rightfully possess. This will make it more likely that you will not deviate from the right course.” (4 : 3) **Footnote No. 4 :** Lit., “whom your right hands possess” — i.e., from the captives taken in a war in God’s cause (regarding which see *surah* 2 notes 167 and 168, and *surah* 8, note 72). It is obvious that the phrase “two, or three or four : but if you have reason to fear....” is a *parenthetic clause* relating to both the free women mentioned in the first part of the sentence and to female slaves — for both these nouns are governed by the imperative verb “marry”. Thus, the whole sentence has this meaning : “Marry from among (other) women such as are lawful to you, or (from among) those whom you rightfully possess — (even) two, or three, or four : but you have reason to fear that you might not be able to treat them with equal fairness, then (only) one — implying that, irrespective of whether they are free women or originally, slaves, the number of wives must not exceed four. It was in this sense that Muhammad Abduh understood the above verse (see *Manar* IV, 350). This view is, moreover, supported by verse 25 of this *surah* as well as by 24 : 32, where *marriage* with female slaves is spoken of. Contrary to the popular view and the practice of many Muslims in the past

centuries, neither the Qur’an nor the life-example of the Prophet provides any sanction for sexual intercourse *without* marriage.

As regards the permission to marry more than one wife (up to the maximum of four), it is so restricted by the condition, “if you have reason to fear that you might not be able to treat them with equal fairness, then (marry only) one”, as to make such plural marriages possible only in quite exceptional cases and under exceptional circumstances (see also the first clause of 24 : 32 and the corresponding note 42). Still, one might ask why the same latitude has not been given to women as well ; but the answer is simple. Notwithstanding the spiritual factor of *love* which influences the relations between man and woman, the determinant *biological* reason for the sexual urge is, in both sexes, procreation : and whereas a woman can, at one time, conceive a child from one man only and has to carry it for nine months before she can conceive another, a man can beget a child every time he cohabits with a woman. Thus, while nature would have been merely wasteful if it had produced a polygamous instinct in woman, man’s polygamous inclination is biologically justified. It is, of course, obvious that the biological factor is only one — and by no means always the most important — of the aspects of marital love : none the less, it is a basic factor and,

therefore, decisive in the institution of marriage as such. With the wisdom that always takes human nature full into account, Islamic Law undertakes no more than the safeguarding of the socio-biological function of marriage (which includes also care of the progeny) allowing a man to have more than one wife and not allowing a woman to have more than one husband at one time: while the spiritual problem of marriage, being imponderable and therefore outside the scope of law, is left to the discretion of the partners. In any event — since marriage in Islam is a purely civil contract — recourse to divorce is always open to either of the two partners. (Regarding the dissolution of a marriage at the wife's instance, see *surah* 2, note 218, pp. 101, 102).

Footnote No. 26, p. 106.

The term *muhsanah* signified literally "a woman who is fortified (against unchastity), and carries three senses: (i) "a married woman", (ii) "a chaste woman", and (iii) "a free woman". According to almost all the authorities, *al-muhsanat* denotes in the above context "married women". As for the expression *ma malakat aymanukum* ("those whom your right hands possess", i.e. "those whom you rightfully possess"), it is often taken to mean female slaves captured in a war in God's cause (see in this connection 8 : 67, and the corresponding note). The commentators who choose this meaning hold that such slave-girls

can be taken in marriage irrespective of whether they have husbands in the country of their origin or not. However quite apart from the fundamental differences of opinion, even among the Companions of the Prophet, regarding the legality of such a marriage, some of the most outstanding commentators hold the view that *ma malakat aymanukum* denotes here "women whom you rightfully possess through wedlock"; thus Razi in his commentary on this verse, and Tabari in one of his alternative explanations (going back to Abd. Allah ibn Abbas, Mujahid, and others). Razi, in particular, points out that the reference to "all married women" (*al-muhsanat min an-nisa'*), coming as it does after the enumeration of prohibited degrees of relationship, is meant the prohibition of sexual relations with any woman other than one's lawful wife.

Muhammad Asad Jesus on Ascension

"...However, they did not slay him, and neither did they crucify him, but it only seemed to them (as if it had been) so; and, verily, those who hold conflicting views thereon are indeed confused, having no (real) knowledge thereof, and following mere conjecture. For, of a certainty, they did not slay him: nay, God exalted him unto Himself—and God is indeed Almighty, Wise." (4 : 157, 158)

Footnote Nos. 171, 172 pp. 134, 135.

2. Thus, the Qur'an categorically denies

the story of the crucifixion of Jesus. There exist, among Muslims, many fanciful legends telling us that at the last moment God substituted for Jesus a person closely resembling him (according to some accounts, that person was Judas), who was subsequently crucified in his place. However, none of these legends finds the slightest support in Quran or in authentic Traditions, and the stories produced in this connection by the classical commentators must be summarily rejected. They represent no more than confused attempts at "harmonizing" the Quranic statement that Jesus was not crucified with the graphic description in the Gospels, of his crucifixion. The story of the crucifixion as such has been succinctly explained in the Arabic phrase *wa-lakin shubbiha lahum*, which I render as "but it only appeared to them as if it had been so" — implying that in the course of time, long after the time of Jesus, a legend had somehow grown up (possibly under the then powerful influence of Mithraistic beliefs) to the effect that he had died on the cross in order to atone for the "original sin" with which mankind is allegedly burdened; and this legend became so firmly established among the latter-day followers of Jesus that even his enemies, the Jews, began to believe it — albeit in a derogatory sense (for crucifixion was, in those times,

a heinous form of death-penalty reserved for the lowest of criminals). This, to my mind, is the only satisfactory explanation of the phrase *wa lakin shubbiha lahum*, the more so as the expression *shubbiha li*, is idiomatically synonymous with *khuyyila li*, "(a thing) became a fancied image to me", i.e., "in my mind" — in other words, "(it) seemed to me" (see Qamus, art. *khayala*, as well as Lane II, 833, and IV, 1500). Cf. 3 : 55, where God says to Jesus, "Verily, I shall cause thee to die, and shall exalt thee unto Me." The verb *arfa'ahu* (lit., "he raised him" or "elevated him" has always, whenever the act of *raf'* "elevating") of a human being is attributed to God, the meaning of "honouring" or "exalting". Nowhere in the Quran is there any warrant for the popular belief that God has "taken up" Jesus bodily, in his lifetime, into heaven. The expression "God exalted him unto Himself" in the above verse denotes the elevation of Jesus to the realm of God's special grace — a blessing in which all prophets partake, as is evident from 19 : 57, where the verb *rafa'nahu* ("We exalted him") is used with regard to the Prophet Idris. (See also Muhammad Abduh in Manar III, 316f., and VI, 20f.) The "nay (bal)" at the beginning of the sentence is meant to stress the contrast between the belief of the Jews that they had put Jesus to a

shameful death on the cross and the fact of God's having "exalted" him unto Himself."

3. "And Muhammad is only an apostle ; all the (other) apostles have passed away before him : if, then he died or is slain, will you turn about on your heels? But he that turns about on his heels can in no wise harm God — whereas God will requite all who are grateful (to Him)." (3 : 144)

Footnote No. 104, p. 89

4. This stress on the mortality of the Prophet — and that all the other prophets who preceded him in time — connects, in the first instance, with the battle of Uhud and the rumour of his death, which caused many Muslims to abandon the fight and even brought some of them close of apostasy (Tabari ; see also note 90 above). In its wider implication, however, the above verse re-states the fundamental Islamic doctrine that adoration is due to God alone, and that no human being — not even a prophet — may have any share in it. It was this very passage of the Quran which Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, recited immediately after the Prophet's death, when many faint-hearted Mus-

lims thought that Islam itself had come to an end ; but as soon as Abu Bakr added, "Behold, whoever has worshipped Muhammad may know that Muhammad has died ; but whoever worships God may know that God is ever-living, and never died" (Bukhari), all confusion was stilled. — The expression "turning about on one's heels" denotes — according to circumstances — either actual apostasy or a deliberate withdrawal from efforts in the cause of God.

The New World Order

by *Maulana Muhammad Ali*

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